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REPORT
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ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION INFORMATION ACT

OCTOBER 19 (legislative day, OCTOBER 2), 1990.—Ordered to be printed

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Mr. BURDICK, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 3069]

The Committee on Environment and Public Works to which was referred the bill (S. 3069) to provide a method of locating private and Government research on environmental issues by geographic location, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

GENERAL STATEMENT

S. 3069 requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to prepare an annual index of environmental research published in scientific journals by the geographic location of the index. This bill also requires all government agencies submitting publications related to the environment to the National Technical Information Service to include keywords which denote the geographic location of the research.

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

Each year, numerous environmental studies are published about the quality of the environment. These studies are abstracted by several information service companies. Keywords typically used to locate these studies include the authors' names, the title, the subject, and any keywords supplied by the author. Scientists often neglect to include the geographic location of the study as a keyword.

Environmental issues arise at various locations throughout the Nation. The intent of this bill is to develop a database of environmental research by the location in which the research is conducted.

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Indexing scientific research by location would allow scientists to track changes in environmental quality over time and to correlate their studies with those of other scientists; would allow the public to learn easily about the quality of their local environment; would allow industry to select appropriate plant sites; and, would assist numerous parties in the completion of environmental audits.

One provision of the bill requires EPA to index articles published since 1970. The intent of this provision is to identify past studies so that these research efforts are not repeated unnecessarily. Since funding for environmental research is difficult to obtain in the current fiscal situation, it is vitally important that these research dollars be spent wisely.

Comments on this legislation were received from EPA. Briefly, EPA believes that they currently have the authority to conduct the measures outlined in this bill. EPA, however, believes geographic indexing to be of modest benefit. The Committee believes that the cost of such efforts is also modest, and thus, directing EPA to conduct such activities is justified.

EPA also expressed concern that selecting the journals from which to index articles might be interpreted as an endorsement of these publications. EPA says that the Agency is not permitted to endorse any product. The Committee does not believe this to be a valid concern as the Agency annually conducts research on commercial products and publishes reports on the performance of these products. Typically, in these cases, the Agency includes a disclaimer stating that no endorsement is implied by the Agency's evaluation of a product. A similar disclaimer could be included with the research geographic location index.

This legislation requires EPA to index 35 scientific journals or conference proceedings per year, beginning with the year of enactment. The Committee specifically chose 35 scientific journals to be selected so that the index would be composed of references from approximately three scientific journals in the following scientific disciplines: wastewater treatment; air quality and meteorology; water quality issues; ground water quality issues; drinking water issues; coastal and estuary/wetland issues; hazardous waste issues; chemical pollution issues; environmental chemistry issues; and environmental toxicology issues. The Agency is given discretion to select other issue areas of concern and to increase the number of reference sources above 35.

The second portion of the bill requires all government agencies submitting documents to the National Technical Information Service to include geographic descriptors indicating the location or locations to which the research pertains. Limited comments were obtained from the National Technical Information Service (hereinafter referred to as the Service). The Service indicated that they include the location among the keywords indexed for the documents the Service abstracts. The language of the bill is intended to require agencies that submit keywords to include geographic descriptors with these keywords. Where agencies submit no such keywords, the bill would impose no requirements on these agencies.

The Service also indicated that many documents are received in electronic form which may not be amenable to indexing. It is not the intent of this Committee to require the Service to include geo-

graphic descriptors on documents received in a form which is not amenable to indexing.

The intent of this bill is to direct agencies other than the Service to provide geographic descriptors for environmental research when descriptors are provided to the Service. The purpose of this bill is not to require the Service to develop such keywords. The Service is directed, however, to include such geographic descriptors as the Service receives. The Service may specify the form in which the keywords are received.

Finally, this bill requires the Service to prepare and submit an annual index of the environmental documents obtained by the Service during the preceding year, by geographic location. This annual index is to be submitted to the Congress. The intent of this provision is to provide Congress with information about the environmental quality of each State.

The Service is to make the index available to the public in accordance with routine sales procedures. The Service may charge for this index an amount sufficient to cover the costs for preparing the document. Similarly, the Service may charge for the index prepared by EPA at a cost consistent with the mission of the Service. In conversations with Service personnel, they indicated that environmental publications are among the Service's best selling publications. The Service personnel also acknowledged that numerous comments have been received from industry seeking a better means to locate environmental information.

SECTION-BY-SECTION SUMMARY

The short title of the bill is "Environmental Research Geographic Location Information Act".

Section 2.—Findings

Two findings set forth that there is not a reliable means to identify environmental research by the location in which the research is conducted.

Section 3.—Purpose

The purpose of this bill is to facilitate locating reference sources on the environmental quality of any given area.

Section 4.—Environmental Protection Agency

This section requires EPA to review at least 35 scientific journals each year and publish an annual index of the articles contained therein by geographical location. Copies of each annual index would be submitted to Congress and to the Service. Distribution to the public would occur via the Service.

EPA would also index journals retroactively to 1970, but would only have to review 20 journals for each year preceding enactment.

Section 5.—National Technical Information Service

This section requires all government agencies which submit environmental reports to NTIS to include some type of geographic descriptor in any list of keywords supplied with the document.

Section 6.—Authorizations

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as necessary to accomplish the purpose of this act.

Section 7.—Expiration of act

The Act would expire in 10 years.

HEARINGS

No hearings were held on this bill.

ROLLCALL VOTES

Section 7(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate and the rules of the Committee on Environment and Public Works require that any rollcall votes taken during consideration of this bill be announced in this report. During the Committee's business meeting on October 4, 1990, S. 3069 was ordered reported by voice vote. No rollcall votes were taken during consideration of this bill.

REGULATORY IMPACT

In accordance with section 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact of the reported bill. The bill does not amend existing law. The bill should not impose any additional regulatory requirements or burden upon the Federal Government or its contractors.

COST OF LEGISLATION

Section 403 of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act requires each report to contain a statement of the cost of the reported bill prepared by the Congressional Budget Office. That statement has been requested. However, it is the opinion of the Committee that in order to expedite the business of the Senate, it is necessary to file this report without the statement.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

There are no changes to existing law.

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